1811

Epilepsy.

H. N. Coleman

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Epilepsy -

1. Epilepsy -
2. Epilepsy -
3 Hemorhagic State of fever
4 Rheumatic do.
5 Rheumatism -
6 Rheumatism -
7 Consumption
8 Consumption
9 Menstruation

This Essay forms a pretty good [illegible] of the [illegible] question — although there is nothing novel to recommend it; yet the author appears to have paid considerable attention in drawing his information from a great variety of Sources; and is consequently entitled to the merit of attention & research —

I would ask him what he particularly means by his term of Congeniality, which he enumerates among the remote Causes of this disease. —

An Inaugural Disertation on Epilepsy

Submitted to the Examination

Of the provost, Trustees, and

Medical faculty of the

University of Pennsylvania

for the Degree of Doctor of Medicine

on the day of April

Eighteen Hundred an Eleven

By Hawes N Coleman of

Virginia

I have chosen Epilepsy for the subject of my inaugural essay.

In treating of this formidable disease, I shall first consider its pathology, and next its method of cure.

The word Epilepsia is varied from epi-lambanesthai, a compound word, which signifies to be seized from above; epi-above, and lambanesthai to seize, to take hold of suddenly. This name was intended by the old physicians to give an idea of its divine origin; for it was anciently supposed to be inflicted and cured only by a secret power, or Demon of Heaven.

Few if any diseases have been designated by a greater variety of ~~w~~ names in both ancient and modern medical writings than Epilepsy.

It was named Eclampsis by Hippocrates, from the scintillations of light which

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which strike the eyes of epileptic patients.

Aristotle denominated this disease Morbus Herculeus, from the uncommon strength of muscular exertion which occurs in the paroxism. This exertion is sometimes so great, that several healthy men will be scarcely able to keep the patient in bed, or prevent him from injuring himself by the convulsive action of his limbs.

Plato called epilepsy the divine affection; supposing from the suddenness and singularity of the accession, and from the patient, (if standing or walking at the time), falling as in the act of worshipping a deity, that this disease was the immediate effect of a divine visitation, or that it was produced by a demon or celestial spirit taking possession of the human frame.

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It was called Morbus comitialis by Pliny, and comiste by others, either because the assemblies termed Comitia were adjourned, when any one present happened to be seized with a fit, or because it was observed to occur more frequently in persons subject to this disease during their attendance at those assemblies.

Celsus termed epilepsy Morbus Sacer et Major. This title connects the idea of its sacred and ~~sacred~~ divine origin entertained by Plato, with that of its superiority in strength and greatness of exertion, denoted by the title Herculeus conferred on it by Aristotle.

Aretaeus however seems uncertain as to the reason why this disease was so called, though he wrote at no very remote period from the time of Celsus

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Aretaeus says — The sight of the paroxism is truly melancholy, and the termination is attended with shame from the involuntary flow of both faeces and urine. Besides the form and origin is beyond all belief; for some immagine, that it is sent from the moon, as a judgement upon the impious; hence it derived the name of Sacer Morbus. — He then adds, — It may likewise have obtained this name from other reasons; — perhaps from the magnitude of the disease, as it was customary to call every thing great by the name Sacer; — perhaps from the cure not being effected by human but divine power; — or perhaps from the appearance of the patient being possessed of a Demon: and it is not improbable that all these may have conspired to

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This disease is termed at one time Vindelles, and at another Caducus, by the excentric Swiss Paracelsus. By the former term he probably intends to give an idea of its demoniacal strength, and by the latter an idea of the circumstance of the patients falling down on its accession.

It is called Analepsia by Riverius; Mal delature by the French; and falling sickness by the English. The technical names mentioned are only a few of those bestowed at different times on the disease of which I am treating.

It is evident from this view of the language of the ancient physicians respecting epilepsy, that their ideas of its causes and nature were extreamly crude and imperfect.

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Sauvages, in considering epilepsy as a diseases distinct from accidental convulsions, enumerates fourteen species: many of these, no doubt, were true cases of epilepsy; but they amount only to varieties, and cannot in correct pathology be regarded as distinct diseases.

Dr. Cullen, in his classification of diseases, makes Epilepsy a genus, which he arranges in the Class Neuroses, and order spasmi. In his first lines, he says, "this disease may be defined, as consisting "in convulsions of the greater part of the "muscles of voluntary motion, attended "with a loss of sense, and ending in a "state of insensibility and seeming sleep."

There is always a state of inconsciousness during the convulsions; but the paroxism does not, according to the observations

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of professor Rush, always terminate in coma or apparent sleep.

Professor Rush with great candour remarks, that "though he has read and ~~thought~~ "thought much concerning Epilepsy, yet he "cannot say he knows much more about "it now, than he did thirty years ago."

The remote causes of Epilepsy are the same as those of fever. They are general and local. The general remote causes are, intemperance in eating, drinking, and venery; great bodily or mental exercise; terror; retention of excrements; suppression of eruptions and secretions; sleeping in the open air, and ~~with~~ in wet cloaths; impure air; sympathy; congeniality; worms. Fasting is also a cause of epilepsy. There is related in Galen a history of a certain grammarian who having abstained two long from food

became epileptic. See Morgagni Letter. IX.
Article VII. Galen in this case considers the bile as the agent which gives the diseased influence. Morgagni says, cases of epilepsy from bile, and other irritating matters as worms, and even from diseases of the viscera, are common, not only among children, but likewise among adults.

The local causes are fractures of the skull, and compression of the brain; Mall conformation of the brain and skull; tumors; ragged warts on the ancles according to Dr. Short; decayed teeth.

The predisposing cause is debility. Hence the paroxisms occur most frequently in the night, as is the case in other diseases which arise from debility of the system.

Hippocrates and Galen supposed

Epilepsy to depend on the constitutional states of repletion and inanition. Either of these states would be, with them, the predisposing cause. But Averrhoes informs us, that physicians in his time regarded this theory rather as a fable, than as an established truth.

The disease has its seat principally in the nerves, muscles, and bloodvessels. When the excitability of these parts is deeply affected by its causes, the cure is difficult. Several of the remote causes of this disease are also EXCITING CAUSES; and in addition to those enumerated I may add as exciting causes — temperature, climate, season, and the periods of the moon: for all these appear to influence the disease, both in regard to its time of recurrence, and to the violence of the paroxism.

Before the disease has become ~~finally~~ firmly established, vehement ~~pafs~~ passions of the mind are among the most common of the exciting causes of the paroxisms. Terror, which has been already mentioned, fear, rage, fury, revenge, love, jealosy, and ambition, are severally observed to induce the fit in persons predisposed to the disease.

In the first or highest grade of the disease, the paroxisms are so violent as to cause an emission of Semen Masculinum, and sometimes an effusion of bloody Sweet. The operations of the mind are totally suspended.

In the second grade the symptoms are less violent; the powers of the body are not intirely prostrated by the force of the paroxism, and even the mind is ~~lost~~ not totally.

In the third grade, ~~the causes of~~ the causes of the disease produce syncope, privation of speech, and inability to use the organs of voluntary motion in general, and slight convulsive motions occasionally.

In the fourth grade it is so mild that the eyes and face only are a little convulsed.

In the fifth grade, Dr Rush says, the memory is not suspended during the ~~pax~~ paroxism; the patient has perfect recollection of all that happened on the preceding day.

The duration of the paroxism is different in different patients, and even in the same patient at different times. The intervals between the fits are also various. Sometimes

they are reiterated several times in the same day, and sometimes they recur only every six or twelve months. In the latter case they are most apt to take place about the time of the equinoxes. In many instances the paroxisms recur at regular periods of the moon.

The attack of epilepsy is preceded by a bitter taste in the mouth of some days duration. The pupils of the eyes are enlarged and vision is irregular.

The accession of the paroxism is sometimes so sudden, that the patient can ~~scar~~ scarcely recognise any premonitory sensations. In many cases however certain premonitory symptoms have some duration before the mind is overwhelmed. A sense of coldness, faintness, or pain, is felt

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at the scobiculis cordis; there is langour or lassitude of the system, pain in the head, vertigo, and drowsiness; the power of speech becomes impaired, and general torpor precedes the fit.

Just before the fit a sensation of a peculiar kind, as of an insect crawling on the skin, of a blast of cold vapour, or of a small sharp pain, is felt in some of the extremities. Such sensation is frequently named Aura Epileptica.

This aura slowly advances towards the head. As soon as it arrives there the patient, if standing, falls down, screaming as if in agony, and the system immediately suffers convulsions more or less general and violent. The patient is now insensible; his face is distorted, red, or pale; and afterwards

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The pulse is variously circumstanced in different persons, and in different periods of the fit.

Treatment.

Our treatment of Epilepsy may be considered as prophylactic, when we endeavour to remove the predisposition, and thereby prevent the accession, by using remedies in the intervals; and therapeutic, when we prescribe methods of cure during the paroxisms.

In a prophylactic plan, our remedies should be adapted to the remote causes, and to the state of the predisposition. For instance when intemperance in drinking has been a principle remote cause, this habit must be broken, and the debility it may have induced must be removed by proper regimen and

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tonic medicines. When worms are a remote cause, they should be ~~ep~~ expelled, or the sistem should be rendered insusceptable of their initation.

Absolute temperance in all things, (in eating, drinking, pleasures, mental exercise, and passions) is perhaps the best preventive measure, but it is difficult to enforce it.

The medicines which have been employed in the intervals as prophylactics, have been more numerous than successfull. They have been principally of the anti-spasmodic ~~kind~~ and tonic kinds.

Of those named antispasmodics, Valerian, Opium, Stramonium, the fœtid Gum-resins, castor, ~~and~~ musk, and foliage, have all been employed; and perhaps the first & last of these have been most ~~successfull~~ usefull. Valerian has, I believe, been

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of considerable service in many cases, though it may not often have effected a perfect cure. The peruvian balsam, and other similar medicines, have also been useful.

The tonics which have had most dependance rested in them, are, cupreum ammoniacum, the nitrate of silver, and the white oxyde of Zinc.

Opium has been found of great use in this disease by Dr. Darwin. It should be administered in a full dose a short time before the accession, in cases in which the paroxisms recur at regular periods.

Dr. Samuel Cooper had some experience of the effects of stramonium in Epilepsy, in the Pennsylvania Hospital. He employed the leaf in powder with advantage. He also relates some communications made to him

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by Dr Hart, which shew that this article may become an important remedy in certain stages and conditions of the disease, when physicians are better acquainted with its properties and its mode of affecting the system.

The Balsam of Peru has been found of great efficacy in convulsive diseases, arising from organic lesions, by Dr Kirkland of Exeter; and in true Epilepsy by Dr Rogers of this city.

Tobacco has proved a remedy of singular powers in the cases in which it has been fairly tried. I am disposed to believe that this medicine, if employed in the manner detailed by Dr Currie, would be found more generally usefull than any in the preceding list. It appears however to be most efficacious when administered during actual indisposition.

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Emetics and gentle purges are necessary when the stomach and bowels are inactive. A long continued salivation is recommended. Dr. Rush says it may act in two ways, by depletion, and by the abstinance which attends this measure.

During the paroxism all ligatures, bandages, and tight dress, must be loosed. The patient should be preserved in an easy, recumbent posture. Tobacco leaves may be applyed to the pit of the stomach; or a decoction of a half a dram, or a dram, exhibited as an enema.

Having no original observations to offer of a practical kind, it is useless to dilate concerning the treatment.